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NO.
TO : Department of State
INFO: Tel Aviv, Cairo, Stuttgart
FROM : Amembassy BONN
SUBJECT: German-Arab Relations
REF : Stuttgart's A-142 of February 5, 1965

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DATE: February 12, 1965

There is enclosed herewith a translation of a recent article on German-Middle East Relations by Giselher Wirsing, one of the editors of the influential weekly newspaper, Christ und Welt. In suggesting that some U.S. quarters would welcome the Ulbricht visit as part of American detente policy, the article illustrates how far otherwise responsible writers can go when a foreign policy problem becomes intertwined with the German question. Wirsing generally takes a pro-U.S. view on most important issues.

For the Ambassador:

Thomas J. Dunnigan
Thomas J. Dunnigan
First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure:

Translation of
Wirsing article.
(Unclassified)

Declassify after February 12, 1966.

FORM DS-323

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Enclosure to A-1391
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Translation
of an article by Giselher Wirsing in Christ und Welt for Feb 5, 1965:

A Stalingrad on the Nile

Ludwig Erhard's Secret Diplomacy and its Results

Tensions between Bonn and Cairo have a much deeper background and broader repercussions than presently assumed in the Federal Republic. With an indescribable innocence the Federal Government fall into a trap set by quite different forces and for quite different motives. What we reported here a week ago is at last common knowledge: Ulbricht's invitation by Nasser is a reaction to Bonn's secret arms supply agreements with Israel. Adenauer and Ben Gurion negotiated the first arms deal of this nature as early as 1960. The Germans at that time tried to anticipate the worst repercussions of the then impending Eichmann trial. Apparently this first arms deal of about 50 million dollars was completed last fall. The Arab world knew about the shipments but angrily accepted them.

According to a New York Times report (which, however, could have been planted for a specific purpose) Israel and Germany concluded a second arms deal of 80 million dollars last October. Aside from other weapons, this new deal primarily supplied Israel with American tanks of the M-48 type. If this report is correct, this second deal was concluded when the dispute over the water of the Jordan was coming to a head and when the Near East again threatened to be the focal point of another major crisis. At that time it should have been obvious to everyone that the Arabs, and especially Nasser, would not tolerate a second German-Israeli arms deal. Counter-measures had to be expected that would blow up the so-far-successful Hallstein doctrine and thus offer the Soviet Union the long-awaited opportunity to elevate the position of the Soviet Zone regime in the Third World to such a level that further talks about Germany would be superfluous.

In his talk with Ambassador Federer, Nasser pointed out that for three years Ulbricht had sought an invitation to Cairo and had always been denied. Presumably Nasser would not have yielded to Shelepin's renewed pressure if the Federal Government had energetically pursued Gerstenmaier's initiative in November. Only after Nasser concluded that Bonn was going to leave things as they were did he turn to Pankov.

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Early this week in another disclosure the New York Times claimed that Washington had agreed to the supply of American tanks by the Federal Republic. The paper also reported that the State Department primarily wanted to encumber the Germans with this deal rather than expose the U. S. to later Arab reproaches. The Federal Republic agreed to this game although some influential politicians and German diplomats in the Near East had emphatically warned of the great risk to the entire German position in the Third World. Since last October's conference of the non-committed nations in Cairo it was known, after all, that Nasser played a key role in this world. This was particularly true after Nehru's death. This has nothing to do with whether or not we like or how we judge Nasser. It was also known that the Federal Republic could hardly isolate a break with Egypt and that, from the moment of this break, the Soviets were bound to brutally intensify their pressure upon India as the second key country of the Third World in order to undermine the position of the Federal Republic there. All the many ramifications of the arms deal with Israel which might lead far beyond Cairo to the political destruction of the position of the Federal Republic were not seen. Instead, Bonn let itself be guided by the opportunism of everyday politics.

It should now be noted that the disclosures about Bonn's arms deal with Israel were made by American circles. These disclosures were made by a paper which has for some time been hinting between the lines that the de-facto recognition of the Soviet Zone would be rather welcome in the interest of a further détente between the U. S. and the USSR. This would, of course, call for the removal of the Hallstein doctrine which so far has proved astonishingly durable. Once it has been removed there would be less need to have regard for Bonn when talking with Moscow. In view of Bonn's masterpiece of secret diplomacy (which was originally made without Schroeder's knowledge) nothing was simpler than to blindly infuriate Nasser by making the proper disclosures. This is exactly what was done.

Now this is where Israel comes into the picture. In Tel Aviv it was observed with great concern that de Gaulle was about to develop a new Near Eastern policy and establish not only normal but even cordial relations with Egypt. This could only mean — even if de Gaulle does not intend to take an unfriendly attitude towards Israel — a weakening of the support Israel has received from France

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since the Suez crisis. In December, de Gaulle sent former Minister President Edgar Faure, who also paved the way for the establishment of relations with Peking, to Egypt for a three-week stay. This was bound to have an alarming effect on Tel Aviv. An invitation of Nasser to Paris no longer seemed out of the question. Under the circumstances it could only be in Israel's interest to cut the Federal Republic off from any possibility of retreat. In other words, Tel Aviv was suddenly no longer interested in keeping too secret that secret agreement about arms supplies because the Israelis properly anticipated Nasser's reaction.

When, last week, the German-Egyptian crisis was reaching its climax, the former Israeli chief of staff Moshe Dayan published an article in Haaretz urging his Government to start a preventive war against the Arabs as soon as the latter begin to divert the water of the Jordan. Minister President Eshkol publicly joined in these threats. Whether bluffs or deadly earnest, these statements were made at a time when they had to be on Nasser's desk when he received the German Ambassador to discuss the invitation of Ulbricht.

How could Federer achieve anything in his talk with Nasser without announcing the immediate discontinuation of German arms aid to Israel? Nasser's argument that in view of Dayan's threats this arms aid now meant direct intervention in an imminent war in the Near East could no longer be met with general statements. Even though Minister Westrick, on the day before, had pointed out to an Israeli representative how difficult the situation of the Federal Republic was because of these arms supplies, the Chancellor, in spite of this dangerous aggravation for our entire foreign policy, kept adhering to the principle "Pacta sunt servanda" ("Treaties must be observed"). Miracles were hoped for.

The parties, including the opposition, hardly saw through this game being played with the Federal Republic. They gave vent to their emotions against Nasser. He is certainly not a gentleman, but the parties demanded about the most stupid thing conceivable in this situation, namely, the use of our development aid to Egypt as a lever. It is true that development aid is always a political factor too, as all who give and accept it know, but in a crisis it cannot be used as an instrument because it looks like blackmail and provokes the spite of the other party, no matter how much this other party is itself blackmailing. It was humiliating hearing the parties suddenly argue in the style of past dollar imperialism.

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Thus, the stupidity and lack of skill of the Germans in crises of foreign policy again manifests itself to an appalling degree. Unable to understand the background of the whole affair, Bonn did exactly what Moscow hardly dared dream possible. It cannot be said at this moment whether and how it will still be possible to heal the breach that is now opening, but it can be said that all responsible people in Bonn have helped so much to ruin past German foreign policy that it hardly exists any longer.